

MURDER TOO

A Thriller in Two Acts

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARA BARON.....40'S, glamorous, sexy

EVE COHEN SNEDEKER....40's, quiet, unassuming

TODD SNEDEKER.....Eve's husband, sarcastic, impatient

LARRY/LUKE.....Studly, back end of young

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Time: The present

Setting: The living room of Mara Baron, the Artistic Director of a major not-for-profit theater. A curved staircase leads to the upstairs, bedrooms, etc. SL is a doorway leading, presumably, to the kitchen, a foyer, and the outside door. SR a door that used to lead to a powder room has been replaced by a very solid metallic door. The powder room has been converted into a safe room, impenetrable from the living room when the door is closed. Right now the door is partially ajar. The audience can see an intercom on the wall just inside the door and a red panic button. The furniture is expensive, and theatrical memorabilia serve as decoration. A laptop computer is open on a table that has a small drawer. The room is in the normal disarray of a lived-in space.

At Rise: WE HEAR the sound of a scuffle. Then a Scream.

MARA (O.S.)
(screaming)
Arrrrhhh!...You're killing me!
You're killing me! Stop!...Arrrrhhh!

Silence.

LIGHTS DIM, LIGHTS COME UP to indicate a brief passage of time.

After a pause Mara rises from the floor behind a sofa. She wears a bathrobe which she now refastens and adjusts.

MARA
Well, that was bold of you.

Larry/Luke rises from behind the sofa. He is dressed in workman's clothes which he is now adjusting, too. He is still shirtless.

LUKE
Nice, though, huh?

MARA
Audacious, certainly.

LUKE
But nice?

MARA

I don't know what made you think
you could take such liberties.

LUKE

You were leaning over me...real
close.

MARA

I was watching you work.

LUKE

Your bathrobe was open.

MARA

Surely not.

LUKE

Wide open.

MARA

Well, shame on me.

LUKE

It was nice, though, right?

MARA

(annoyed)

Yes, yes, yes, it was nice...
You're as bad as an actor.

LUKE

I am an actor.

MARA

I should have known.

LUKE

You saw me in an audition for
Temporary Help a few years ago.
That's a seriously underrated
play, by the way.

(extends his hand)

Larry LaVin. I was up for the part
of the good-looking sheriff?

(N.B. LaVin rhymes
with tin.)

Mara looks at him blankly.

LUKE

(continuing)

You went a different direction.

MARA

I often do. I'm afraid I don't remember...

LUKE

I was Luke Lawless then. That's my stage name.

Luke retrieves his tool belt from behind the sofa and straps it on.

MARA

That is one very butch accessory, I must say.

LUKE

Tools are great, but you got to know how to use them.

MARA

I said it was nice.

LUKE

I just do this kind of work between engagements.

MARA

Really?...Oh, you mean...

She indicates the door to the safe room. Luke crosses to the safe room door, to continue his work.

LUKE

An actor's got to do what he can to make a buck.

MARA

(a la Scrooge)
Are all the restaurants closed?

CELLPHONE RINGS. Luke has a very distinctive, comical and very loud cellphone ring.

MARA

(continuing)
What on earth...?

LUKE

That's me.

MARA

You have a lot to answer for.

Luke starts to answer his phone.

MARA

(continuing)

Don't you dare. You don't come to my house to talk to someone else on the phone. How rude. Turn it off.

LUKE

Sheesh, talk about your after-glow.

Luke turns off cell phone.

MARA

You're like the audiences in my theater, they don't turn off their phones when they're told to, then they sit there, texting in the dark, their little screens glowing like bugs, distracting everyone around them. No consideration for others.

LUKE

You're really a buzz kill.

MARA

Are you done with your work yet?

LUKE

Just about. When I'm finished I'll program your code for you and...

DOORBELL RINGS

MARA

Oh, god, I completely forgot. In there, quick, in, in...

She shoos him into the safe room.

MARA

(continuing)

Stay till I call you.

LUKE

Hey, I've got things...

Exit Luke into safe room.

Mara closes the door to the safe room, then crosses to the doorway, SL, checking her appearance first. She closes the laptop computer in passing.

Exit Mara

Enter Mara followed by Eve Cohen Snedeker and Todd Snedeker.

Eve and Mara exchange kisses. Todd, with apparent reluctance, gives Mara an air kiss.

MARA

I'm so sorry, I was laid...
delayed. I'll get dressed right
away.

EVE

No, it's our fault, we're early.

TODD

We're always early. Eve just can't
understand the concept of
fashionably late.

EVE

I think it's rude to be
late...This one
(refers to Todd)
thinks that's silly of me...

MARA

(of Todd's jacket)
Is that new?

TODD

Madam laid it out for me to wear,
I dasn't question her decisions.

MARA

You're looking very sharp. Not
like an writer at all.

EVE

Do you like it? It's a good color
for him, isn't it?

MARA

It looks expensive.

EVE

I like my husband to be well-
dressed.

TODD

I am her trained ape and clothes
horse.

EVE

Oh, now...

(of the door)

Oh, you've done it already.

MARA

Just today.

TODD

Done what?...

(notices door)

What happened to the powder room?

Todd tries to open the door but it won't open.

TODD

(continuing)

What's this now, a pay toilet? I know times are hard, but jeez..

MARA

You didn't tell him? I thought you told each other everything.

EVE

I don't tell him your business.

TODD

What?

EVE

You don't have to talk about it.

TODD

Of course she does, how else will I know what's going on? You won't tell me apparently.

MARA

I asked her not to tell anyone. It makes me sound so paranoid...It's a safe room. It's a place for me to be protected if there's an intruder in the house.

TODD

Are the critics after you again?

EVE

It's not a joke, Todd. Some lunatic is sending her messages...

MARA
(patronizing)
Maybe I should tell it, Eve...
Someone is sending those things
you see in the movies--you know--
words cut out of the newspaper and
pasted together.

TODD
They're not.

MARA
They most certainly are.

TODD
What do they say?

MARA
"Your misdeeds are not forgotten"
..."Bitch, you have caused so much
suffering". Those are the nicer
ones.

TODD
You're not serious.

EVE
Of course she's serious. It's
frightening, people are crazy
these days.

TODD
Have you told the police?

MARA
There's nothing they can do unless
something "happens". They told me
to take precautions--as if it were
a social disease. They say that
ninety percent of the time things
like this just blow over, the
messages stop and nothing happens,
but I don't intend to be in that
other ten percent. So I built the
safe room--and I got a gun.

TODD
You don't have a gun.

She opens a drawer, produces a pistol.

MARA

Why do you doubt everything I say?
I have a permit and I took lessons
on how to use it. Within twenty
feet I'm pretty good.

Todd starts to pace off the distance from the entrance to the
living room to the safe room to see if it's twenty feet.

MARA

(continuing)

You must find this constant
questioning very annoying, Eve.

(to Todd)

Yes, twenty feet.

(N.B. Obviously this
figure must be
adapted to width of
actual stage)

TODD

Do you have any enemies?

MARA

I've been through all that with
the police.

TODD

Maybe I can help figure it out. I
do write murder mysteries, you
might recall.

MARA

Who said anything about murder?

EVE

Todd, really...

TODD

I have a certain knowledge of
criminal psychology.

MARA

I'm sure you do.

TODD

Hey, if you don't want my
assistance, just say so.

EVE

She did.

TODD

Sorry I offered to help, shoot me.

MARA

Ah, I don't have a permit for that unless you are offering bodily harm.

Mara waggles the pistol playfully.

EVE

Mara, are you sure it's unloaded?

MARA

I'm sure it's not. It wouldn't do me any good unloaded, would it? Don't worry, the safety is on. I took my lessons, remember.

TODD

You must have some really serious enemies.

MARA

(humorless laugh)

Oh, my dear. My theater puts on six shows a season. Every actor or playwright or designer who I didn't use for the last fifteen years could be carrying a grudge.

TODD

But that's just business.

MARA

It's business to me, it's rejection to them. They're all so loosely wrapped to begin with, I'm surprised one of them hasn't gone over the edge before this.

TODD

You're not overstating your importance to their mental stability, are you?

MARA

You should sit through an audition sometime. Most of them haven't got a chance of being cast and probably know it but there they are, time after time, smiling, Acting!, for thirty seconds before going back to their jobs as temps or waiters or...I feel for them, of course...

TODD

Of course.

MARA

Your heart goes out to them, but there are so many of them and they're so insistent.

TODD

I know what you mean. People. God, what a nuisance.

EVE

It's easy for you, Todd. You write your novels all by yourself, locked in your office. You don't know what rejection is like.

TODD

Every writer knows what rejection is like.

MARA

Your scary little books all get published, don't they?

TODD

My scary little books.

EVE

(hurriedly)

They're wonderful.

MARA

Didn't I say that? Of course they are, they're perfect examples of that sort of thing.

TODD

Thank you so much. Most kind.

MARA

Oh, dear, we've offended him.

Awkward silence.

MARA

(continuing)

This place is a mess, looks like a brothel the morning after. I'll just straighten up.

EVE

Oh, I'll do that.

Eve starts to straighten things up, Mara makes no effort to stop her, despite her words.

MARA
You don't need to.

EVE
I don't mind.

TODD
(annoyed)
Leave it.

EVE
I enjoy it.

TODD
She spent more time with the housekeeper growing up than with her mother.

EVE
Mother was busy...I don't mind, really.

MARA
That's sweet of you. I'll just get dressed.

TODD
We'll stand guard down here. Leave the gun out, if I see any angry actors, I'll shoot.

EVE
It's not funny, Todd.

MARA
If it's that vile little critic, Rosenberg--he'll be the one with the fangs--leave him for me.

EVE
That odious man. Why does he hate our theater so much?

MARA
I turned him down.

TODD
I thought all theater critics were gay.

MARA

He's gay as an ostrich plume. He thinks his boyfriend is a playwright and I think he's a typist so he gets his revenge in his reviews.

EVE

It's just shameful.

TODD

Go and dress in peace, Eve and I will defend you from the incensed not-for-profit theatrical community.

EVE

You shouldn't tease her, Todd. People are demented these days, it could happen to any of us.

MARA

Well, probably not. You're not famous, Eve--and you're lucky you're not...I really don't like to talk about it, it makes me sound like such a diva.

EVE

(sympathetically)
Not at all. You are special.

MARA

Well...End of subject. Let's not make a big thing of it...I won't be long.

Exit Mara Upstairs

TODD

Stop cleaning up her mess. You're not her maid.

EVE

I don't mind. She has such a busy life; I'm happy to help.

Eve continues to clean up through the following until everything is ship-shape.

TODD

I don't know how you put up with that condescension. "Aren't you lucky you're not famous like me."

EVE

Well, I'm not.

TODD

Neither is she.

EVE

She's the artistic director of one of the most important not-for-profit theaters in the country, she's very famous in the theater world.

TODD

Famous in the theater is not famous. The theater isn't that important. I wouldn't be surprised if she made this whole thing up to get some publicity...

EVE

She wouldn't do that.

TODD

Remember when she put on that "Jesus Was A Gay Jew" play and then wrote anti-Semitic letters to herself and waved them at the press?

EVE

It was never proven she wrote them...Besides, ticket sales soared.

TODD

She knows her audience.

EVE

...It was a pretty boring play, otherwise. She had to get an audience somehow.

TODD

Don't you think this "endangered but courageous lady" stuff is more of the same? She has a bad season and suddenly she gets threatening mail? That gun is probably a prop from one of her shows.

Todd goes to the drawer, gets the gun.

EVE

Todd, don't.

Todd handles the gun, decides it's real.

TODD

I guess it's real. Heavy, anyway.

EVE

Of course it's real if she said it is.

TODD

With all the lying she does?

EVE

That's only for work. People in the theater don't tell the truth, you can't expect them to.

TODD

Why do you always defend her? The only reason she's run the theater this long is that she's a conniving, double-dealing, four-flushing hypocrite.

(jokingly)

I admire her for that.

EVE

You're terrible.

TODD

Seriously, Eve, she's got a reputation as one of the biggest bitches on two legs.

EVE

That's from people who envy her. They say that about any strong woman, especially if she's attractive.

TODD

You think she's attractive?

EVE

You don't?

TODD

Like a vampire bat. Her latest lover is probably chained to the wall in there while she slowly drains his blood...Has she told you who he is yet?

EVE

I think I confide in you too much. It makes me feel disloyal sometimes.

TODD

If you want to start keeping secrets, I suppose we can do that.

EVE

She hasn't told me his name yet. I think she might be a little embarrassed by this one. He could be a dentist or a businessman or something.

TODD

Or the plumber or the delivery man or...

EVE

She's single, she's an adult...

TODD

Why do you stick up for her? She has the morals of a hyena.

EVE

She's had a lot of tragedy in her life, she's lost two husbands...

TODD

That's pretty careless of her. She drowned the last one, didn't she?

EVE

He slipped in the bathtub. You've been reading your own books...

Eve finds a tool that fell from Luke's belt behind the sofa. She continues straightening, holding the tool.

TODD

You mean my little books. The ones I write for leprechauns and pygmies.

EVE

If she finds some diversion from the pressures of her job in men...you just don't understand how stressful running a theater can be.

TODD

I know a little about the theater. I have written a couple of plays, too, you might remember...although I don't know why you would remember, no one else does.

EVE

Of course I remember. They were very nice plays.

Eve finds Mara's bathroom slippers behind the couch. She places them on the staircase, again without comment.

TODD

"Nice." Christ. "Nice."

EVE

Well, what do you want me to say? They were wonderful.

TODD

I don't want to talk about it.
(pause)

If they were so wonderful, why didn't you have her produce them?

EVE

That would be nepotism. What would people say?

TODD

Maybe they'd say "look, an intelligent play for a change. I thought he only wrote novels. The man's a genius."

EVE

Yes, maybe they'd say that.

TODD

She wouldn't recognize a real adult play if it smacked her in the face.

(more)

TODD (cont'd)

Without the contributions from your foundation she'd be doing nothing but one-person shows about women who got sick and won't shut up about it. You're more important to the success of that theater than she is, and yet you defer, defer, defer...

EVE

Oh, now...

TODD

Doesn't matter, I couldn't care less anyway. I wouldn't want her to direct my work, she'd just butcher it.

EVE

Oh, come on. You'd kill to have her put on your play.

TODD

You've always got that nasty little twist, don't you? Sweet, compliant, then slip in the knife.

EVE

No, I didn't mean anything...I'm sorry.

TODD

She'd never produce my play anyway, let's not kid ourselves.

EVE

She might, why not?

TODD

She doesn't like me.

EVE

Why do you always say that? We're good friends, here we are together for drinks...

TODD

Oh, shared alcohol is the true test of friendship, I suppose.

(more)

TODD (cont'd)

She's your friend, Eve, you two go back forever, I understand that, but it doesn't carry over to her and me, she doesn't like me, she might be jealous of sharing you with me, I don't know, and, frankly, I'm not wild for her, either.

EVE

Not now, Todd. Not again. Not here.

TODD

Why didn't we meet in a restaurant so we could leave when I'd had enough of her ego?

EVE

Can't we just enjoy the evening?

Enter Mara

On the staircase. She has changed her clothes.

EVE

(continuing)

Don't you look nice!

MARA

Well, it's nothing. I saw it on the rack at Mitchell's and I said it's sooo expensive, but go ahead, you deserve it.

TODD

That's the virtue of talking to yourself, no one disagrees...Do you still have a toilet in there?

MARA

It's such a mess, they aren't through working yet. Use the guest bathroom upstairs.

TODD

And where do I find that?

MARA

Sorry. Up the stairs, turn left, second door on your right.

With his back to Mara, Todd gestures to the safe room for Eve's benefit.

TODD
 (sotto voce, to Eve)
 A body.

Suddenly WE HEAR a voice on the intercom coming from the safe room. It sounds like a man being murdered.

LUKE (O.S.)
 Arrggghhh!

The others are startled.

LUKE (O.S.)
 (continuing)
 Help! Help! He's after me, help!

Eve gasps, Todd is baffled.

Enter Luke from safe room. He's happy and smiling, the others are stunned.

LUKE
 Just kidding!

EVE
 Good Lord!

TODD
 Who are you?

MARA
 You moron! You scared us half to death.

LUKE
 Pretty convincing, right?

EVE
 Are you all right?

MARA
 Did you actually think that was funny?

TODD
 It certainly livened up the party.
 Nothing like a stiff drink and a heart attack.

LUKE
 I got it all cleaned up in there
 now, Ms. Baron. Slick as a whistle.

MARA

I thought you were finished, I forgot all about you.

LUKE

(Smiling, to others)
How soon they forget.

MARA

(to others)
He was just doing some...

LUKE

Installation.
(to Eve)
Hi, I'm Luke Lawless.
(to Todd)
Luke Lawless.

He shakes hands with both.

TODD

Todd Snedeker. This is my wife, Eve Cohen Snedeker.

LUKE

Not Todd Snedeker, the novelist!

TODD

Well, yes.

LUKE

Wow. I love your books.

TODD

(Surprised)
Thank you. Which ones have you read?

LUKE

All of them. Twice. What are you working on now?

TODD

Actually...

MARA

Well, thank you very much, Mr...Lawless. You must be in a hurry...

LUKE

Oh, that's all right. I've got time for that drink you promised.

MARA

I don't think...

LUKE

(to others)

She said "after that performance, it's the least I can do." Of course I don't consider it a performance, it's all part of the service. If you're going to do a thing, do it right, that's what I'm all about. If I don't get it right the first time, I come back and do it again and again and keep on doing it until she's satisfied. That's just the way I do. I'm sure you're the same way with your novels, aren't you, Mr. Snedeker? They wouldn't be so polished if you didn't keep at it.

TODD

Get this man a beer, Mara. It sounds like you owe him one.

LUKE

(to Mara)

If you've got any nibbles, that would be nice, too. I worked up quite an appetite.

MARA

(sotto voce,
disgusted)

Nibbles.

Mara crosses towards kitchen.

EVE

I'll help you.

TODD

Red wine's fine for me.

Exit Mara and Eve to kitchen.

LUKE

(To Todd)

So what's the next book about? I just love your stuff.

TODD

Well, it's about a man who wants to murder his mistress because she's threatening to tell his wife about the affair.

LUKE

It happens.

TODD

But it's not as easy to murder your mistress as you might think.

LUKE

Not usually.

TODD

See, if you're married and have a mistress...are you married?

LUKE

No, no.

TODD

If you were, you wouldn't be stupid enough to tell anyone that you were having an affair, would you?

LUKE

Tell no one, trust no one.

TODD

That's the idea. And if you were married you probably wouldn't have anyone you talk to anyway. But a woman always tells somebody else.

LUKE

Can't stop 'em.

TODD

A man keeps his mouth shut because he doesn't want it known, a woman talks about it because she does. For her, an affair with a married man is a social event. She doesn't get full value unless she shares it and lets her friends know she's desirable. Even if she swears she'll keep it quiet there's always a friend who lives in Seattle or someplace who "would never tell anyone."

LUKE

The fly in the ointment.

TODD

So once the mistress turns up dead and the police start looking for suspects, up pops the girl friend in Seattle.

(girl voice)

"Oh, she was having an affair with..." What's your name again?

LUKE

Luke.

TODD

"She was having an affair with Luke." So the cops start looking at Luke and, pffft, that's the end of him. Even if he gets away with the murder the wife knows he was having an affair and if they've got a pre-nup, he's on the sidewalk without a penny to his name except the one in his loafers.

LUKE

There's no justice.

TODD

So there's the problem.

LUKE

Why not find out who the girl friend in Seattle is? She's probably emailing her; check out her computer, see who she writes to, then kill the girl in Seattle before you off the mistress. There's nothing to connect you with Seattle, right?

Todd thinks about it a moment.

TODD

That's not bad.

LUKE

So, first thing steal her computer, get her email list. Then hire someone else to do the job in Seattle and you've got your alibi because you're sitting at home with the wife.

TODD

But have you noticed how many times somebody tries to hire a killer and it turns out the guy is an undercover cop?

LUKE

That's because they ask around for somebody, an informer hears about it and there you go, having coffee in a diner with a plainclothes detective.

TODD

You seem to know a lot about it.

LUKE

Oh, I've had some go-rounds with law enforcement. It doesn't always turn out well.

TODD

Really?

LUKE

Let's just say if things had gone a different direction...

TODD

That's interesting.

LUKE

I've done a lot of interesting things in my day, been a lot of people. Got to make a living, you know...Or marry well.

TODD

(sourly)

Nothing comes without its price, of course.

LUKE

So your man has to be careful to not trust a referral. He's got to meet somebody by accident he can trust and then trust him. That's how I'd do it.

TODD

A serendipitous meeting.

LUKE

You find him when you're not looking. Sort of a Zen thing.

TODD

...We should talk some more. Do you have a card?

LUKE

Fresh out. I can write it down for you.

Todd digs through his pockets for something to write on and pulls out a number of articles that have been cut from the newspaper and puts them in front of him where they will remain until later.

TODD

I know, it's the old joke about the writer who never has anything to write with. Well, put your email on there.

Luke reads headline on article.

LUKE

(reads)

"Actress Found Dead in Apartment"

TODD

Research. I clip the good ones out of the paper.

Luke writes on the article.

Enter Eve and Mara with three glasses of wine, a beer, and a bowl of peanuts. Mara puts the peanuts in front of Luke.

MARA

Nibbles.

Luke surveys the wine and the beer.

LUKE

Got any Scotch?

Mara fixes him with a withering stare.

LUKE

(continuing)

Not too much or I get talkative. Single malt, if you have it.

Todd indicates safe room.

TODD

(to Mara)

There's no reason I can't use this now, right? Or am I going to get locked in?

LUKE

It only keeps people out, not in.

(To Mara)

But I haven't set the code yet so if you just leave it ajar when you're not in there you'll be able to open it...Neat, by the way.

MARA

What?

LUKE

I'll have the Scotch neat.

Exit Mara for the Scotch, fuming.

Todd Exits into powder room.

LUKE

(continuing; to Eve)

I'm sorry, I didn't get your name.

EVE

Eve Cohen Snedeker.

LUKE

It's very nice meeting you, Eve.

He shakes her hand, holds onto it.

LUKE

(continuing)

We've met somewhere before, haven't we?

EVE

I'm sorry, I don't...

LUKE

I never forget a pretty face-- which guarantees I wouldn't forget yours.

EVE

(Pleased, embarrassed)

Oh, I think you'd forget me pretty quickly.

LUKE

You're not looking through my eyes. A playwright sees things others don't. He looks deeper.

EVE

Oh, you're a playwright?

LUKE

Oh, yeah. Struggling, you know, but I'm sticking with it. It's hard, you get discouraged trying to make art, something that's meaningful and edifying, yet lyrical and emotionally stirring. Maybe it's an impossible goal but you've got to keep trying, don't you? It takes so little encouragement to keep a playwright going--but that's so hard to find.

EVE

I know. We all need encouragement.

LUKE

But where's an artist who has real respect for his art to find it in this heartless commercial world?

EVE

Not everyone is heartless.

LUKE

I can see that you're not. Your spirit just radiates kindness and generosity--maybe that's where your beauty comes from.

EVE

(flattered, shy)

No, really...

LUKE

Unfortunately, it seems that people with a generous spirit are never in a position to help.

EVE

Well, it's not impossible. Maybe we should talk to Mara...

Enter Todd from safe room.

EVE
 (continuing)
 Oh, Todd. Mr. Lawless is a writer,
 too. He's a playwright.

LUKE
 Struggling playwright.

TODD
 Is there any other kind?

EVE
 I was thinking I should talk to
 Mara about...

TODD
 (sourly)
 Doing his little play?

EVE
 Well, a reading to start with.

TODD
 (to Luke)
 This is your lucky day, isn't it?

LUKE
 Going pretty good so far.

TODD
 A whole bunch of serendipitydoodah.

We HEAR a Gasp, off.

EVE
 Mara? Are you all right?

Mara Enters holding one of the messages she's been getting,
 cut-out letters pasted onto a sheet of paper. In her other
 hand she holds the glass of Scotch for Luke.

MARA
 This was stuck under the door!

EVE
 Another one?

Eve takes the message from her.

TODD
 What's it say?

EVE
 (reading)
 "Die, bitch, next time we meet!"

Luke comes to look at the message then reaches for the glass of Scotch.

LUKE
 (of the Scotch)
 Is that for me?

MARA
 (venomously)
 Actor!

She swallows the drink herself, comes up coughing.

EVE
 What kind of a person would do
 this?

MARA
 ...What is this?

Mara picks up a fist full of the newspaper clippings that Todd took from his pockets.

TODD
 Oh, sorry. It's just...

MARA
 What is this!!

TODD
 They're just clippings, I'll clean
 them up.

Mara hastily looks at several then throws them to the floor.

MARA
 You?! You?!

Mara crosses to her gun.

EVE
 Mara, what's the matter?

Mara pulls out the gun, assumes the proper police approved shooting stance, legs apart, triangular arms, left hand supporting the shooting hand. She does this by the numbers and we can see that she has been taught but is not practiced at it. She aims directly at Todd.

TODD
Don't point that at me.

MARA
You're the one who's sending me
the threats!

TODD
What are you talking about?

EVE
Mara, he wouldn't do that.

MARA
(of clippings)
Look at these, they're just the
same. You put this under the door
when you came in!

TODD
Don't point that. I didn't do any
such thing.

MARA
Get down on your knees!

TODD
What?

MARA
(to Todd)
Get down on your knees or I'll put
you down.

TODD
I didn't do anything! These are
just...

EVE
He does this all the time, his
pockets are full of them...

MARA
(to Todd)
What did I ever do to you, you
bastard! Is it because I didn't
produce your little play? Is this
some twisted revenge?

TODD
I swear to God...

MARA
 (to Luke)
 Call 911.

LUKE
 Who, me?

MARA
 It's a nine, followed by two ones.
 You can do it.
 (to Todd)
 On your knees, you psycho! Do you
 think I'm afraid to use this?

EVE
 Mara, he wouldn't do this, why
 would he do it?

MARA
 He's been jealous of me ever since
 you married him. He hates our
 friendship.

TODD
 I don't care about your
 "friendship". Whatever you two do
 in the privacy of...

EVE
 Todd, shut up!

MARA
 (to Todd)
 This is your last warning. You
 kneel or I'll remove your kneecap.

She is very convincing. Todd kneels. Eve kneels in front of
 him to shield him.

Mara turns to Luke who is by the telephone, but watching,
 mesmerized.

MARA
 (continuing)
 Nine comes right after eight,
 eight's the one that looks like a
 snowman.

EVE
 Mara, please! He didn't do it,
 it's not him. I swear to you!

MARA
 He had the perfect opportunity.

EVE
He wouldn't, he didn't, I promise.

MARA
(wavering)
How can you promise?

EVE
He's sarcastic, he's disappointed,
he's bitter, but he's not that
mean.

LUKE
Wow, that's cold.

TODD
(To Luke)
What, you're perfect?

EVE
I vouch for him, I'm asking you to
take my word.

MARA
(reluctantly)
All right, Eve. For you.

Mara puts the gun back in the drawer. She looks at Luke who quickly picks up the phone.

MARA
(continuing)
Not now, you idiot.

Todd gets shakily to his feet and crosses towards the exit.

TODD
Come on, Eve.

Eve is still on her knees, compulsively picking up the clippings, straightening them out, folding them.

MARA
(to Todd, all
sweetness)
Are you leaving? I thought we were
having drinks.

TODD
Eve.

MARA
You don't have to go, Eve. We'll
have a nice talk.

EVE
(to Todd)
Maybe I'll stay for a little bit.

TODD
Jesus Christ, Eve. Come on.

EVE
I don't want to be rude.

LUKE
I'll probably stick around, too.

No one pays any attention to Luke.

EVE
She didn't mean it, did you, Mara?

TODD
Of course she meant it!

EVE
Well...I can't just leave. I
should at least help clean up.

MARA
That's sweet of you, Eve.

TODD
God, the two of you are lethal
together.

MARA
I promise not to scare you again.

TODD
(to Mara)
Bitch, you'll pay for this!

Exit Todd. We HEAR the DOOR SLAM.

BLACKOUT

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2

Scene: The same.

Time: Later

At Rise: Night. The stage is lighted only by ambient light coming through the window.

We Hear the outer door being unlocked and opened.

Enter a person dressed in trench coat with collar turned up and a Trilby hat and wearing, incongruously because it's nighttime, sunglasses. The person studies the laptop computer screen, tapping a few keys.

MARA
(off)
Is that you?

The person hears but continues to peruse the laptop.

MARA
(continuing; off)
If it's not you, go away. I have
a gun.

The person is searching the computer for something and stops only when Mara appears.

Enter Mara on staircase. She wears a sexy negligee. One hand is behind her back. She TURNS ON LIGHT at top of stairs.

MARA
(continuing)
You really have to come up with a
better disguise, you know; that is
so melodramatic.

TODD
I can come and go from here
without being recognized, that's
what matters. I could be anybody.

MARA
And all of them very suspect. You
look ridiculous in that hat.

TODD
As long as I don't look like
myself.

(more)

TODD (cont'd)
It's what your well-dressed
androgynous stalker would wear.

MARA
That's not funny.

Mara reveals the gun she was holding behind her back. She comes down the stairs and puts it back in the drawer.

TODD
You're carrying that around with
you now?

MARA
I take those messages seriously
even if you don't.

TODD
I took them seriously when you
were pointing that thing at me.
You scared the hell out of me. I
wish you had warned me.

MARA
Just an improvisation. I started
as an actress, you know.

TODD
Next time let me know.

MARA
If you had known it was coming you
wouldn't have been so convincingly
frightened.

TODD
Well, she believed it, I think she
swallowed the whole thing...

MARA
She went down on her knees to beg
for you. That was nice.

TODD
What did you two say about me
afterwards?

MARA
Oh, I don't talk about you. She
does.

TODD
What did she say?

MARA

She thinks you look good in your clothes.

TODD

That's it? Am I just her possession. Have you noticed how often she refers to me as "my husband" rather than my name? Like "my car" or "my house" or something else she owns...Or she refers to me as "this one". I hate that, it makes me want to throttle her every time.

MARA

Now that you know she will lie for you, you should treat her better.

TODD

Oh, she pretends to be subservient but that's just a show, that's how she thinks men expect their wives to act, but do I have actual control over anything, is any of her money really mine? Not a nickel. She obviously doesn't trust me.

MARA

(mocking)

The injustice.

TODD

She has no *reason* to distrust me. I've been very careful, she has no excuse to go sniffing my clothes or asking where I've been, and it's getting worse. To distrust me without cause is a slur on my character. It's hurtful.

MARA

I'm outraged.

TODD

And it's humiliating. No wonder I'm having an affair. She leaves me no choice...Well, at least our performance today should convince her I'm not having an affair with *you*.

MARA

It better work. If I lose her foundation's annual donation the theater's done for.

TODD

I'm not looking forward to living on my book sales again, either... But if I don't tell her and you don't tell her, who can?...Who have you told about us?

MARA

No one, of course.

TODD

Not some girl friend, someone you're sure you can trust?

MARA

My dear, all my friends are in show business, you can't trust any of them...Who have you told?

TODD

No one. You know, that's dangerous enough....but if she finds out...

MARA

We really should end this now before she does.

TODD

I've been thinking about that... What if something happens to her?

MARA

Whatever do you mean?

TODD

I'm just saying that if anything did happen to her, something tragic...

MARA

Don't even think about it! Eve is my golden goose, I'm sunk without the support of her foundation.

(afterthought)

And of course she's my dearest friend.

TODD

I'd be her successor as trustee of the foundation. I'd be your new goose. You know you can count on me.

MARA

So I'd be under *your* thumb instead of hers? How many of your little plays would I have to put on then?

TODD

Only if you found them worthy, of course. I wouldn't want to impinge on your artistic freedom...You could rely on my support, is what I'm saying, just as I know I can rely on yours...in case anything happens to Eve.

MARA

...You aren't serious that anything would happen to her--are you?

TODD

Of course not.

MARA

Of course not.

TODD

Where do you get such ideas?

MARA

I've read your stuff. I know how your mind works.

TODD

My stuff?

MARA

I do love her, you know. She's been my best friend since college.

TODD

She adores *you*...What did you mean, lie for me? All she said was that I didn't send the messages. That's not a lie.

MARA

How does she know? You might be.

TODD

You don't believe that.

MARA

Who knows? It could be anybody. I think it's that bastard Rosenberg, but it could be you.

TODD

Why would I do that?

MARA

I leave the discovery of human motivation to the actors. It makes them think they're perceptive.

TODD

What could I possibly gain?

MARA

I'm sorry I mentioned it. Let's go upstairs. I'm chilly in this schmata. You can take it off and warm me up.

TODD

I want to know what you meant by that.

MARA

Don't be tedious. I didn't mean anything by it.

TODD

You have never spoken an uncalculated word in your life. What could I gain by terrorizing you?

MARA

...It would give the police a convenient suspect when you grow weary and decide to bump me off, wouldn't it?

TODD

Why on earth would I do that?

MARA

So you don't deny that you'll grow weary of me. I knew it!

(more)

MARA (cont'd)

I can see it already, churning in your little mind, "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, she'll turn on me."

TODD

Would you?

MARA

Of course not, I'm the most loyal of women. That doesn't mean you wouldn't want to kill me. I'm sleeping with my assassin!

TODD

That's crazy. Why would I want to kill you?

MARA

(growing hysterical)

Who knows why anybody does anything? Somebody wants to kill me, don't they? That's what the notes are all about. But why me? Why does anyone hate me?

TODD

Nobody hates you.

MARA

They all hate me. The actors hate me, the designers hate me, the subscribers grab me in the lobby,
(whining voice)

"Why don't you put on better plays?" I don't like better plays! I like these! They're safe, they've all been produced by some other theater first. "Why don't you do exciting new work?" What do they think, I read every play that's submitted to me? Please! Everybody hates exciting new work when they actually see it. I'm doing them a favor. But do they appreciate it? They won't be happy until I'm nailed to the stage. Even the theater's board of trustees hate me.

TODD

You're being a little paranoid, don't you think?

MARA

Eve's the only supporter I've got on the board and they listen to her because of her money but I watch them every week, plotting my downfall. Half of them want me to do "Waiting for Godot" and the other half want "The Odd Couple". I'm doomed! I wouldn't be surprised if they're sending me the threats.

TODD

Calm down.

MARA

Don't tell me to calm down! I'm not a calm person! I'm an artist! If I calmed down I'd collapse. Maybe you can be calm, no one's threatening to kill you...God, I get so tense!

She grabs his hand, starts for the stairs.

MARA

(continuing)

Come on, I need to vent.

TODD

I love it when you're out of your mind. Right here. I'll bend you over the table.

MARA

I save the acrobatic performances for special occasions...Besides, you're not the only one with a key.

TODD

Who else?

MARA

Eve has one for emergencies. Do you want her to come in and find us draped over the furniture?

TODD

What kind of emergency would she have?

MARA

Not hers, mine--and to water my plants when I'm out of town.

TODD

Who else has a key? This numbskull
Luke Somebody? What was he doing
here?

MARA

Putting the lock on the safe room.
He still hasn't finished, so I
guess he'll be back.

TODD

Uh-huh. I guess he will.

MARA

What does that mean?...Oh, now
really, you're not suggesting...
Why would I want a sexy young hunk
like that when I have a paunchy
middle-aged towering intellect
like you?

TODD

Good point.

MARA

Let's go before I cool off. You
can whisper sweet-nothings
afterwards.

TODD

Let's talk about revenge, it's
more exciting.

Exit Todd and Mara, upstairs.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

END SCENE 2

SCENE 3

Several days later.

Luke is working on the safe room door again. He wears his tool belt, working clothes, etc. Mara's computer is no longer in the room.

Enter Mara on staircase. She is partially dressed.

MARA

How much longer is this going to take?

LUKE

(disappointed)

You got dressed.

MARA

I have things to do.

LUKE

I'll finish this right up and we can get back to our business.

MARA

We have no further business. Just finish with the door.

LUKE

What's the rush?

MARA

I can't close the door until you finish because then I can't get in.

LUKE

So, leave it ajar.

MARA

It's also a powder room, you moron.

LUKE

Now and again you have a somewhat abrasive manner. Has anyone ever told you?

MARA

Not until after I fire them, then they're quite candid.

LUKE

I can see you're getting tense again. I can fix that.

MARA

Fix the door.

LUKE

Tell me your code and I'll put it
in for you.

MARA

I'm not going to tell you my code.
It's private.

LUKE

Do you know how to program the
code?

MARA

No.

LUKE

So, I'll do it for you. Somebody
else should know it anyway.

MARA

The whole point is that I'm the
only one who can get in there.

LUKE

What if you die in there?

MARA

Why would I die in there?

LUKE

These things happen.

MARA

If it does, you won't be around to
come to my rescue.

LUKE

After all we've meant to each
other?

MARA

Look, Luke, Larry, whatever you
call yourself...

LUKE

Oh, you can keep calling me what
you've been calling me.

MARA

(as a name)
"Hey, you?"

LUKE

More like...

(ecstasy; as a name)

"Yes! Yes! You son-of-a-bitch,
Yes!"

MARA

One unguarded moment.

LUKE

I counted three.

MARA

Nice to know you were so involved.

LUKE

A good craftsman pays attention to
detail.

MARA

Look, it's been swell but it was
nothing more than a temporary
lapse in self-control. I have a
lot of bad habits. This one's over.

LUKE

You're dumping me?

MARA

(mockingly)

It's for your own good, we would
only hurt each other; it's not
your fault it's mine; when you
speak of me, and you will, be
kind; we can still be friends, etc.

LUKE

I don't think so.

MARA

I have a reputation to uphold, you
know.

LUKE

You're got a reputation, all right.

Mara takes that in, angrily.

MARA

I can't have an out-of-work actor
with a tool belt coming in and out
at all hours.

LUKE

You think you can just wave your hand and that's it? Who do you think you're dealing with here?

MARA

The guy who's installing my safe room. That is your job, isn't it? And by the way, when did you become a playwright?

LUKE

The same time I read all of Snedeker's novels, when you hid me in here. I could hear everything on the intercom and realized who they were--or think they are. So I adapted.

MARA

Well, aren't you the devious little opportunist?

LUKE

You do what you need to to get ahead in show business. You can't rely on talent.

MARA

You would know.

LUKE

I'm a much better actor than you give me credit for.

MARA

That wouldn't be hard. I give you no credit.

LUKE

No, you don't give me a *chance*. All I want is a chance. Do you know what it's like to be introduced to somebody as a actor and they ask "oh, what you have you done that I've seen?" and you have nothing to tell them? "I did an unpaid workshop in Philly four years ago?" We come to the open auditions at your theater and it's like being allowed to stand on the bread line. We know we won't get much, but we might get something.

(more)

LUKE (cont'd)

What we get is 60 seconds. One minute and we're gone but in that minute we've had a glimpse of glory. There you are, on the other side of the desk and you're the goddess, the dispenser of all that's good. You're the rising sun. For 60 seconds you're all I can see, so radiant you blind me. If you smile at my acting I might get the job, I might get to work, I might get my hour to strut and fret and upon the stage. You are more than important, you're divine...and then, pfff!, it's over. I didn't get the part. Was I too tall, too short, too good looking, not ethnic enough, too ethnic? I don't know, I'll never know, you didn't smile for me. I'm as good as any of them, better than most but you just didn't like me. YOU didn't like ME! GOD didn't like ME. You went a different direction.

MARA

You should use that as your audition speech. It's convincing.

LUKE

I convinced you that I find you attractive, too. Now *that's* acting.

MARA

That will do it. Pack up, our business is over.

LUKE

You don't quite get it, do you, bitch?

MARA

What did you call...Where's my computer?

LUKE

How would I know?

MARA

Where's my computer? It was right here. You stole my computer.

LUKE

I didn't touch your computer. When was I supposed to steal it?

MARA

You've gone out to your truck about eight times. I suggest you go out there once more and bring it back and I won't call the police.

LUKE

You're not going to call the police on me.

MARA

You've got ten seconds to go out to your truck.

She holds up her cell phone.

LUKE

(Menacingly)

Ten seconds? It might take a little longer than that.

He advances on her.

DOORBELL RINGS. Luke stops his advance.

MARA

Finish your work and get out.

LUKE

I finished my work a couple days ago. I'm not finished with you because I'm the one who says when it's over and how it ends.

Mara puts her cell phone down and starts towards the door. Luke hurries to get between her and the door.

MARA

Get out of the way.

LUKE

(with menace)

I don't think we want company.

DOORBELL RINGS again.

MARA

If you're "acting" like a psycho,
you're doing a good job, I'm
convinced.

LUKE

It's not acting if it's for real.

He steps towards her. She steps back to the table but Luke
grabs her arm. It is not entirely clear, even to Mara, if
this is a real threat or a prelude to rough sex.

We HEAR SOUND OF KEY and door opening.

EVE (O.S.)

Mara? Are you home?

Luke releases Mara.

MARA

Eve! Come in!

Enter Eve. She is obviously upset and doesn't notice the
tension between Mara and Luke.

EVE

Oh, Mara, I was afraid you'd be at
work.

MARA

I will be as soon as I get rid of
him.

EVE

Oh, hello.

LUKE

Hi. How you doing?

EVE

Fine, thank you.

(to Mara)

I called your cell phone but you
must have it turned off.

MARA

I have to escape from them
sometime. Whatever they need will
keep until I get to the office.

EVE

I have to talk to you.

MARA
What's the matter?

Eve looks at Luke.

EVE
I need to talk to you alone.

LUKE
Hey, I can take a hint. I know
when I'm not wanted.

MARA
I wish. Get your tools and go.

Luke starts towards the safe room.

LUKE
Yes, boss.
(to Eve)
Nice to see you again.

EVE
...What?

LUKE
I said it's nice to see you again.

EVE
(flustered)
Oh, well, it's nice to see you,
too...

MARA
I'll finish dressing. Come on up.
(to Luke)
I expect you to be gone.

Mara starts up the stairs. LAND LINE HOUSE PHONE RINGS. Luke
returns to his work.

MARA
(continuing)
Get that, would you, Eve? Tell
them I'm not here.

Exit Mara, up the stairs.

EVE
(phone)
Hello?...She's not...What?...Could
you say that again?...But he's
here now...Was he fired, or...?
When exactly?...

Luke turns his attention to Eve. Eve glances at him, then quickly away.

EVE
 (continuing)
 I see. Yes, thank you very much
 for telling us...You have a nice
 day, too.

Eve hangs up the phone, carefully not looking at Luke at his position at the safe room door.

LUKE
 Everything all right?

EVE
 Yes...Mara!

LUKE
 You seem troubled. Can I help?

EVE
 No, no...Mara!

LUKE
 You know I can help you.

EVE
 It's not that sort of thing.
 (louder)
 Mara!!

LUKE
 I'm versatile. What sort of thing
 is it?

He crosses towards Eve who reacts nervously, but he stops short as:

Enter Mara on staircase.

MARA
 What are you yelling about? Is he
 bothering you? Leave her alone,
 get back to work.

LUKE
 Just offering to help.

MARA
 Finish your job.

LUKE
(to Eve)
If you need anything, you know I'm
your man.

Luke goes into the safe room but listens with door ajar.

MARA
(of Luke)
Talk about unintended
consequences...What is it, Eve?

EVE
That was the safe room company on
the phone. The repairman said he
was delayed and he's just leaving
the office now.

MARA
(indicates Luke)
He's already here.

EVE
(Hushed)
It's not him. He was fired three
days ago.

MARA
Then what is he doing...

Luke steps into the living room.

LUKE
Puzzling, isn't it?

Mara crosses quickly to the drawer where she keeps her gun.

MARA
It's you, isn't it? You're the one!

LUKE
That's what they all say. I'm
flattered.

Mara points gun at him.

MARA
Don't move! Get down on your knees.

LUKE
You're not going to shoot anybody.

MARA
What makes you think that?

LUKE

You told me so. At least I think that's what you said; you were making lots of interesting noises at the time.

MARA

I mean it.

LUKE

You were going to call the police, earlier, but you didn't do that, either.

MARA

Eve, call the police.

LUKE

No, don't, Eve. The police are such spoilsports.

Eve hesitates.

MARA

Do it!

Eve picks up house phone, Luke swiftly takes it away from her.

EVE

(frightened)

What do you want?

LUKE

Where to begin? Fame, fortune, job security...

He approaches Mara who waves the gun.

MARA

I'm warning you!

She resets her shooting stance, menacingly.

LUKE

Boo!

The women gasp and jump a bit. Luke turns to Eve.

LUKE

(continuing)

Hugga bugga!

EVE
(frightened)
Stop it!

LUKE
Sure, I didn't mean to scare you...

Luke suddenly grabs Eve and makes her his shield.

LUKE
(continuing)
Gonna shoot me now? Gonna shoot me
now?

MARA
Let her go!

LUKE
Why? She feels so good.

Eve stomps on his foot, hits his face with a backward fist then strikes down with her elbow into his stomach. She has obviously taken classes. Luke is stunned into releasing her. Eve leaps forward and out of the line of fire between Mara and Luke.

LUKE
(continuing)
You bitch!

MARA
Stop!

Luke leaps forward. Mara FIRES THE GUN. Luke sinks to his knees.

With a cough that brings up blood, he falls face down, dead.

EVE
Oh, my god!

BLACKOUT

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

AT RISE:

We are back to the last action before the end of act one. Luke is holding Eve. Eve stomps his foot, fist to his face, elbow to the stomach. Luke releases her, Eve leaps out of the line of fire.

LUKE

You bitch!

MARA

Stop!

Luke leaps forward. Mara FIRES THE GUN. Luke sinks to his knees.

With a cough that brings up blood, he falls face down, dead.

EVE

Oh, my god!

MARA

I had to. He left me no choice, you saw it. I had to.

EVE

Oh, Mara.

MARA

He attacked me, he came at me! I told him to stop!

EVE

I know, I know.

MARA

He was threatening you, too. He was after both of us.

EVE

Do you know how to find a pulse?

MARA

What else could I have done? I warned him, he knew I had a gun. I told him to stop!

Eve kneels down to feel his neck as they do on television.

EVE
(horrified)
I think he's dead.

MARA
What if he isn't?

Eve leaps back up. Mara points the gun at Luke's corpse.

EVE
Don't, don't.

MARA
Did he move? Did I see him move?

EVE
Oh, please, put it down.

MARA
If he moves, I'm shooting him
again.

EVE
Mara, it's not an execution, it
was an accident.

MARA
That's right, it was an accident.
He was cleaning the gun and it
went off.

EVE
What?

MARA
No, you're right. He was an idiot.
He was an actor. He was clowning
around with the gun, acting, I
told him not to, you told him not
to...

The women have moved away from the corpse and turned their
backs to it, but Mara still holds the gun.

EVE
Mara, what are you saying?

MARA
We have to get our story right.

EVE
We have to call the police.

MARA

Eve. Listen to me. We should call the police, I know that...but I can't. I can't tell them I shot him.

EVE

He threatened you, I saw it.

MARA

I had all that trouble with the police about my last husband's death.

EVE

He drowned, that wasn't your fault.

MARA

Umhuh. But it's one of those things people don't forget... Besides, I was having an affair with him.

EVE

With Luke?

MARA

He probably told somebody; when the police find out they'll think it was a lover's quarrel.

EVE

You were having an affair with him?

MARA

I'm under a lot of pressure at work. I get very tense.

EVE

But, Mara...

MARA

You could tell them you shot him. I'd swear he was threatening you...

EVE

No, but...

MARA

I know, why would he be threatening you when he was sending the messages to me...All right, he was threatening me and you shot him to save me...you could strangle me a little bit, not much, just enough to leave marks...

EVE

Mara, I can't call the police either.

MARA

Why not?

EVE

I was having an affair with him, too.

MARA

You? With him? How could you cheapen yourself like that?

EVE

He was awfully sweet to me. I felt sorry for him, he was a struggling playwright.

MARA

No, he wasn't.

EVE

He said he was. He needed my help. I thought we could give him a workshop at the theater.

MARA

Does he even have a play?

EVE

He could write one, how hard could it be?

Luke, mortally wounded but not yet dead, starts to twitch. At first the women do not see him, their backs are turned.

MARA

If his acting is anything to go by, it could be pretty bad...But...when you slept with him, did he do something rather extraordinary with his...

EVE
 (suppressing a giggle)
 He had talent.

MARA
 Where did you learn all that...

Mara mimes the foot stomp, fist to the face, etc.

EVE
 I took a class. It was just
 instinctive. I was so scared I
 tinkled a little.

MARA
 So did I.

They giggle a bit.

EVE
 We shouldn't be laughing. Why are
 we laughing?

MARA
 I'm tense, I'm very tense. You
 know how sensitive I am.

Luke struggles to his knees and gives a gagging cough. The women look at him, horrified.

MARA
 (continuing)
 Oh, god!

EVE
 (to Luke)
 She didn't mean it.

Luke makes it to his feet. He turns to look blurrily at the women, coughs again and blood dribbles from his mouth. Mara lifts the gun.

EVE
 (continuing; to Mara)
 Oh, please don't!

Luke staggers to the safe room and collapses as he pulls the door shut behind him. He is now locked in the safe room, dead or dying.

MARA
 No!

EVE

What...

MARA

No, no, no!

EVE

He's alive.

MARA

I could see that, Eve.

EVE

He's bleeding.

MARA

Well, he's been shot.

EVE

He's still alive, though. That's good, isn't it?

MARA

Is it?

EVE

We've got to help him.

MARA

He closed the door, we can't get in there, nobody can, that's the whole point of a safe room.

EVE

You can't get in at all? Don't you have a key or a code...

MARA

He has the code!...All I ask is a quiet life. Why do these things always happen to me?

Eve crosses to safe room door, tugs on it but it won't budge.

EVE

(to the door,
tentatively)

Hello?...We're sorry.

MARA

Get away from the door, he might come out again.

Eve recoils from door.

EVE
(louder)
We're sorry.

MARA
No need to shout. There's an
intercom. He can hear us--if he
can hear anything.

EVE
(to Luke)
It was an accident. She didn't
mean to.

MARA
(to Luke)
It was your own damned fault.

EVE
(to Mara)
Don't rub it in.

MARA
Stop apologizing. He was going to
kill me.

EVE
We've got to get help for
him...don't we?

MARA
Do we?

EVE
We can't just leave him...

MARA
Let's think, let's think, let's
think...We can't call the police.

EVE
A doctor will have to tell the
police about a gunshot.

MARA
I think he's beyond doctors.

EVE
(loudly, to Luke)
If you're alive, make some noise
and we'll get help for you.

They listen, hard. No noise.

MARA

He's dead.

EVE

I wonder if he knew we were sorry.

MARA

Jesus, Eve.

EVE

Well...

MARA

We have to get rid of him. How do we get his body out of here?

EVE

Isn't there someone at the theater who could help? Stage hands?

MARA

Eve, you've been on the board of trustees as long as I've been artistic director. We don't have stage hands, we can't afford them. We have teenage apprentices.

EVE

There must be somebody.

MARA

Somebody who won't talk. That leaves out everybody from the theater...My mind isn't devious enough for this.

EVE

...My husband wouldn't talk.

MARA

Your husband?

EVE

He has a very devious mind, he uses it for his work all the time.

MARA

You mean his little books?

EVE

He doesn't like "little." I was meaning to tell you.

MARA
God, people with egos...
(pause)
I can't think of anything better.
I guess you should call him.

Eve is near Mara's cell phone. She picks it up and starts to dial.

MARA
(continuing)
But don't say anything.

EVE
What?

MARA
They can listen in, they record
these things, don't they?

EVE
Who?

MARA
I don't know.

EVE
I'll text him. I don't think they
record that.

She sends a text message.

EVE
(continuing; the
message)
"Come now! Exclamation point."

She closes phone.

EVE
(continuing)
I think we'll be all right now. My
husband will know what to do.

LIGHTS DIM TO BLACK

END SCENE 4

SCENE 5

A few minutes later.

The women both have stiff drinks in their hands.

MARA

What did he want with my computer?

EVE

Who?

MARA

Luke. He stole my computer. It's not new, I've got more valuable things to steal. What would he want with it?

EVE

I don't understand anything he did.

MARA

What was he up to?

EVE

Maybe it was part of his plan.

MARA

What plan? He's not smart enough to have a plan on his own...I wonder if Rosenberg sent him.

EVE

When did he steal it?

MARA

Just before you came...thank god you came...why did you come?

EVE

Oh, I forgot that.

MARA

You said you needed to talk to me.

EVE

I don't think this is the time. You must be feeling awful.

MARA

It was just a computer, nothing in there I needed except my address list.

EVE

I mean about killing somebody.

MARA

Oh.

EVE

You must feel awful.

MARA

Yes. Yes, I do. Just awful.

EVE

I can't even imagine how I'd feel if I killed a man. I'd be in shock.

MARA

I am, really, but I've determined not to think about it. He was a stalker, he was crazy, it was self-defense and I'm just not going to worry about, so there you are.

EVE

You're so brave.

MARA

Well...No need to carry on about it...Let's talk about something else. Why did you say you came over?

EVE

I don't think this is the time...

MARA

What is it?

EVE

This is your moment, really...

MARA

For god's sake, Eve, what is it? Quit mousing around and tell me, you're driving me crazy.

EVE

I'm sorry.

MARA
I didn't mean to yell. You know I
love you.

EVE
I know.

MARA
(impatiently)
So?

EVE
I think my husband is having an
affair.

MARA
Who? Your husband?

EVE
Yes.

MARA
Todd?

EVE
Well, yes.

MARA
No!

EVE
I think so.

MARA
I'm sure he's not.

EVE
What's wrong with me, Mara? Why do
they always cheat on me?

MARA
They're men, what else are they
going to do?

EVE
What do I do wrong?

MARA
You mustn't take it personally.
They always do it eventually.

EVE
Your husbands didn't cheat on you,
did they?

MARA

Hmm?

EVE

But then they both died, didn't they? You've had the worst luck.

MARA

But I've always had you, Eve. You've been my good luck.

EVE

Oh, no, I just...

MARA

You've been my greatest friend, sometimes my only friend, unswerving in your loyalty since we were roommates at college.

EVE

You were the most exciting girl I'd ever met.

MARA

And you were my very first rich person. We've been best friends ever since, no matter what. That's important to remember, Eve; no matter what.

EVE

I know.

MARA

Love does not alter when it alteration finds...You took one of my men, for instance, but I still loved you.

EVE

I would never do that.

Mara points to the safe room and Luke.

MARA

Remember when we were at Sarah Lawrence and I was seeing that boy, that townie, what was his name?

EVE

Arthur.

MARA

No, no...Artie. I came into our room and found him attacking you and went after him with my birken stocks?

(laughs)

He went through the window like the place was on fire...

EVE

He broke his ankle.

MARA

Serves him right.

EVE

He wasn't really attacking me. I felt sorry for him. He was an unhappy boy.

MARA

All the boys at Sarah Lawrence were unhappy. That was their appeal.

EVE

He was so insistent.

MARA

The point is, I forgive you. You're only human, Eve.

(thinks about it)

We all are, I suppose...Yes, I suppose we are. And men, what do they matter, really? In the long run. You can hoard them, you can share them, but can you count on them? No. You can't trust a married man any more than a rat on a leash. Who can you count on? Your friends. Friendship between women trumps everything. I will always be your friend, Eve...no matter what. Remember that.

EVE

I will.

MARA

Good. So...Do you know who he's having the affair with?

EVE

No.

MARA
(deeply relieved)
Well, nothing to worry about then.

EVE
How so?

MARA
Hmm?

EVE
Why isn't there anything to worry about?

MARA
I mean, maybe he's not having an affair. Why not give him the benefit of the doubt?

EVE
You said none of them could be trusted.

MARA
What does it matter what he does, really? As long as he loves you.

EVE
The lawyers care. It will make a difference in the divorce if I can prove it...

MARA
I say, let sleeping dogs lie.

EVE
Who is my dog sleeping with, though?

MARA
He comes home to you at night, doesn't he? That's what really counts. Why involve some poor woman who was undoubtedly tricked and bamboozled...or possibly overpowered? Who's to say?

EVE
Why do we do it, Mara?

MARA
I don't do it.

EVE

I mean the men. What pleasure do we get from the men? Apart from the obvious.

MARA

Oh, I don't know. They're like puppies. They want to lap your face and you can pretend that they're doing it because they like you instead of just having an instinct to lick. You like the attention, they like a warm body. When they're tired they collapse and you've got to clean up after them. It's why people have pets, isn't it? If you had a pet dog and he jumped around and sniffed other people, it wouldn't bother you, would it? It's just what they do.

EVE

So you think I shouldn't do anything?

MARA

Just let it go, it will be so aggravating to pursue it.

EVE

I thought a private detective might be the way to go.

MARA

Oh, no. No, no.

EVE

Why not?

MARA

Some sleazy man sitting in a car, watching me through a camera lens, rubbing himself? That's an ugly thing, Eve.

EVE

Not watching you, Mara. Watching my husband.

MARA

I was empathizing. It sounds so perverse.

EVE

He'd be a professional, Mara. I don't think he'd be a pervert in a trench coat with a hat pulled over his eyes.

MARA

What? What makes you say that?

EVE

Say what?

MARA

I can't concentrate on this when I have that body in there. It's all too depressing.

EVE

Sorry...Maybe if we clean up a little bit we'll feel better.

(of blood on the rug)

If we do this right now it might come out.

MARA

Consuela will take care of it on Monday.

EVE

Are you sure you want Consuela to know about it?...If I can just do something with my hands, my head will settle down.

MARA

I'm the artistic director of the most important not-for-profit theater in the country! I lead, I inspire, I choose, I delegate. I'm a beacon of taste and integrity to the entire theatrical community here and abroad. I'm internationally known! I'm the artistic director, I don't do things with my hands!

EVE

I'll do it, I don't mind.

(of blood)

You can't let it set.

Exit Eve into kitchen.

MARA

(Loud enough for Eve
to hear)

I'm not angry at you, Eve. This business has me so upset...I'm trying to think if it's my fault in any way. Did I do something to bring it on? Is there anything I could have done differently? Is it just me? Do I just attract people? In the theater the subscribers seem to love me, or am I imagining that?

Enter Eve from kitchen carrying rubber kitchen gloves, a salt cellar, a box of baking soda, a sponge and a dish of water. During the dialogue she dons the gloves, gets on her knees and goes to work on the blood on the carpet.

EVE

You're not imagining it. People love you.

MARA

It's vain of me to think so, I suppose.

EVE

Just the truth.

MARA

Well...so be it. It's not my fault if some love too much...Why does the board hate me?

EVE

The board doesn't hate you.

MARA

They want my shows to make money! I'd be laughed out of the serious theatrical community if I did that. You're the only friend I have on the board. If anything were to happen to you, Eve... without your backing, I'd be gone.

EVE

You'd still have my foundation behind you. I've named you as my successor as trustee.

MARA

Really? Me? I thought your husband...

EVE

Now that I don't trust him...Who knows better than you what I would do with the money?

MARA

You mean I'll control the theater? I'll have access to all that money? I'll have the board completely under my thumb!

EVE

...But only if something happens to me.

MARA

Well, of course. And why should anything happen to you? I don't even want to think about it.

CELL PHONE RINGS with Luke's distinctive ring. The women are startled.

EVE

What's that?

MARA

Where's it coming from?

The phone continues to ring as they search for it.

EVE

I think it's in there!

She indicates the safe room. They freeze and look at the safe room in horror. The phone continues its incessant and annoying sound.

EVE

(continuing)

What is that?

MARA

It's his cell phone.

EVE

That's the worst...

MARA

I know. Shhh!

They listen, cell phone continues.

Cell phone finally stops. They go to the door and listen.

MARA

(continuing)

No one lets their phone ring that long unless they're dead.

EVE

I hope he didn't suffer.

MARA

I hope he did.

EVE

Mara, you don't.

MARA

I'm an artist, Eve. I can't function in an atmosphere of fear. I couldn't believe that nobody took those crazy messages seriously.

EVE

I did.

MARA

As if I'm some melodramatic drama queen.

EVE

I took you seriously, I believed you...I'm just going to get some clean water.

Eve takes the bowl of water to the kitchen.

Exit Eve

Mara has her back to the entryway leading to kitchen and outside door.

MARA

Look at the suffering he put me through. Look at all my anxiety because of those notes, never knowing who it was or when he might strike.

(more)

MARA (cont'd)

I could have been walking down the street and any one of a thousand deranged costume designers might have jumped out of the shadows, channeling Sweeney Todd. It was like having a fatwa on my head.

Enter Todd

He has just entered from the front door. He is DRESSED IN HIS COSTUME of trench coat, hat, sunglasses. He grabs Mara from behind in a lover's embrace.

MARA
(continuing)

Yahhh!

TODD
Here I am, not a moment too late.

MARA
Get off me, get off!

TODD
I came like the wind when I got your message. "Come now!". I love it when you're urgent.

MARA
(hushed)
Get away, get back.

TODD
Right here, just like this, like drunken Brits in an alley...

MARA
(hushed)
She's here...

TODD
What? Who? She?

Enter Eve

She runs in from kitchen with more water, sees a peculiar figure apparently wrestling with Mara from behind. Eve grabs the gun.

EVE
Let her go!

MARA
(for Eve's benefit)
Unhand me! How dare you!

TODD
Put the gun down!!

EVE
Todd?

MARA
Good Lord, it's Todd!

TODD
I got a message.

EVE
Why are you dressed like that?

TODD
What?

EVE
Is it raining?

TODD
I thought it might.

EVE
You wore that ratty coat? I was
certain I threw that away. You
can't go out in that, people will
think I don't take care of you.
And where on earth did you get
that hat?

TODD
Oh, I had it around.

EVE
(to Mara)
You leave them to dress themselves
and they put on anything.

TODD
(to Eve)
If you'll just lower that gun for
a second...

He embraces Eve.

TODD

(continuing)

I didn't know you'd be here, too,
darling. The message came on
Mara's phone, so I assumed...

He mimes, over her shoulder, "what the hell is going on?" to
Mara. Eve puts gun down.

TODD

(continuing)

What a pleasant surprise.

(brightly)

What's up? Why the urgent message?
Did someone slip and fall?

EVE

Oh, well...it's complicated.

MARA

There's a dead body in the powder
room and the door's locked. How do
we get him out?

TODD

(Speculatively)

There's a dead body in a locked
room. How do we get him out?...
How many guesses do I get?

EVE

No, it's really true.

TODD

Someone wandered off the street
and died in the powder room.

EVE

He's been shot.

TODD

Wandered in, shot himself, then
died in your powder room.

(to Mara)

What an interesting life you lead.

MARA

You're an idiot.

TODD

Anyone you knew?

EVE

Luke.

TODD
Luke?...Luke!

MARA
Now you're catching on.

TODD
Luke shot himself? Are you serious?

EVE
Mara shot him.

MARA
Eve and I did it together, sort of.

TODD
Eve?

EVE
Well...

TODD
Not Luke.

MARA
Why, were you having an affair
with him?

TODD
Why would you shoot Luke?...Did
you catch him stealing?

MARA
Why would you say that?

TODD
What?

MARA
What would he be stealing?

TODD
I'm sure I don't know.

MARA
My computer?

TODD
What?

EVE
Luke was the stalker.

TODD
I thought he was the installer.

EVE
He was a playwright.

MARA
He was an actor. They'll do anything.

EVE
What were you doing to Mara when I came in?

TODD
(to Eve)
What?

EVE
You were embracing her.

TODD
What?...I thought she was you. Did you really shoot Luke, darling?

EVE
Sort of.

MARA
We did it to save Eve. He was attacking her. I would do anything for Eve.

TODD
That's heartwarming, but it hardly explains...Is he really in there? Is this a joke of some kind?

MARA
He's in there. Dead.

EVE
We hope not.

MARA
Yeah, we hope not.

Todd approaches safe room door. He looks to Eve for confirmation.

TODD
Really?

EVE
(Shouts)
Really! Mara shot him!

MARA
We did it together...

EVE
(Still shouting)
She shot him and he bled on the
carpet and then he went in there
and closed the door and I'm not
sure I can get the blood out! What
don't you understand about that?!

TODD
Why are you yelling at me?

EVE
Honestly, Todd, it's so obvious.

Eve returns to her cleaning.

MARA
He was the stalker, he sent the
messages. He was going to kill Eve.

TODD
Why was he going to kill Eve if he
was stalking you?

MARA
She had a relationship with him.

TODD
What does that mean?

EVE
(Shouting)
Will you get him out of there!

TODD
I've never seen you like this.

EVE
Sorry.

TODD
No, I like it. A little fire.

MARA
Get an axe or something and break
the door down so we can get him
out of there.

TODD
What about the police?

MARA
We've decided not to tell the police.

TODD
You decided not to tell the police.

EVE
For heaven's sake, Todd. We ask you to do one little thing. If you're not going to do it, then I just don't know...

Eve rises, picks up the gun by the barrel with thumb and forefinger, very gingerly, and takes it to the kitchen along with the bowl and sponge.

Exit Eve to kitchen.

MARA
(hurriedly and hushed)
She knows, Todd. She knows you're having an affair.

TODD
She knows I'm having an affair.

MARA
Stop that!...She knows and it's only a matter of time before she knows *I'm* who you're having it with. She's talking about hiring a private detective.

TODD
She's not.

MARA
It's only a matter of time before we're caught...Do you remember how we discussed what we would do if she found out?

TODD
(cautiously)
Sort of.

MARA
You remember. We have to do something about her. Now.

TODD

Do, what can we do?

MARA

It was your idea in the first place.

TODD

You mean...?

MARA

Would you rather wait until she talks to her attorneys?

TODD

Oh, god.

MARA

It's easier than you think.

TODD

Here?

MARA

We can say my stalker mistook her for me and killed her. I managed to get the gun and shot him and he crawled into the safe room to die.

TODD

We ought to think this through.

MARA

Can you think it through faster than she can get to her lawyer? She probably knows about us already and if not she'll figure it out pretty quick. Seeing you in that outfit jumping on me like a dog in heat is a pretty big clue.

TODD

...How would we do it?...Not that I want to.

MARA

Get something from the kitchen. An axe, a knife, a blunt instrument ...just get behind her and do it.

TODD

You have an axe in your kitchen?

MARA

Improvise.

TODD

Why don't you shoot her, too?

MARA

For one thing, she took the gun into the kitchen with her. For another, it might be a bit difficult to convince the police that she and Luke shot each other with the same gun. You're supposed to be good at this sort of thing.

TODD

Well, I'm rattled, I admit it. How can you be so calm in a crisis like this?

MARA

I run a theater, it's never not in a crisis...Pull yourself together. We have to do it now. We have someone to blame it on, it takes care of both bodies, we won't have another opportunity like this. It's now or we both lose her money...What are you waiting for? Go get something.

TODD

Well, pardon me, but one is reluctant to murder one's wife in person. In front of a witness.

Enter Eve. She still wears the rubber gloves and holds the gun gingerly by the tip.

EVE

Did you figure something out?

TODD

What do you mean?

MARA

She means about the body in the powder room. Todd is going to get something in the kitchen to break down the door with.

Todd stands still, paralyzed.

MARA
 (continuing)
 Todd. What are you waiting for?

EVE
 There's that big cleaver I used
 when we made Chinese hacked
 chicken for your party.

MARA
 That was a lovely dish.

EVE
 I think I used too many Szechuan
 peppercorns.

MARA
 No, it was delicious...
 (to Todd)
 Yes, a cleaver would do it...the
 problem won't go away on its own.

Eve puts the gun down and opens the drawer where it is normally kept.

TODD
 Eve...darling...

EVE
 It's in the bottom drawer on the
 left, just below the knives.
 You'll find it.

TODD
 I don't know...

EVE
 (to Mara)
 This one can never find anything.

The "this one" enrages Todd and he screws up his courage and goes to the kitchen.

Exit Todd to kitchen.

EVE
 (continuing)
 He's kind of hopeless, really. Not
 much to waste your life on, do you
 think?

MARA
 What are you doing with my gun,
 Eve?

EVE
Cleaning it.

But Eve is not cleaning the gun. She is taking bullets from the drawer and loading it.

EVE
(continuing)
Do you find him so irresistible?
I never thought he was all that great. Kind of plodding, actually, like his little books. And he's such a pathetic liar. Ask him a question he doesn't like and he goes stone deaf, What, What?...Or is he different with you?

Mara realizes that Eve knows about the affair.

MARA
(Sighs)
No, not really.

EVE
It couldn't have been the sex...or maybe that's my fault. I've never really enjoyed it. It seems so personal.

MARA
It can be useful, but I know what you mean.

EVE
So why him?

MARA
Oh, who knows? He was pestering me, trying to kiss me in the kitchen when you were out here, sending me flowers, sending me emails...You know how it is, they wear you out. It just seemed easier...That's not how you clean a gun, Eve.

EVE
Yes, I know. I took a class, too...If you had told me I would have made him stop bothering you.

MARA
I couldn't very well talk to you about it, now could I?

EVE

Why not?

MARA

Well, don't be stupid.

EVE

I'm not stupid, Mara, I'm just very forgiving...but I have my limits...Why do you hate me so much?

MARA

Because you're rich! You're stinking rich! You're filthy rich! You've always been rich. No matter what happens, you'll always be rich. The board can fire me, the theater can go to hell, and you'll be rich! I have a dead man in my powder room right now and you're *still* rich!...Sorry.

EVE

I understand. I know it's unfair.

MARA

You know I love you. I'm just tense.

EVE

I didn't ask to be rich.

MARA

(another eruption)

Well I do! What good does it do me?...I'm sorry again.

EVE

That's all right, you have your way of doing things. I have mine...Arthur was my boyfriend first, by the way. He was sweet and I liked him and you slept with him and took him away. When you walked in on us in the dorm, he wasn't attacking me, I invited him.

MARA

You've held that against me all this time?

EVE

Not at all. I learned from it. You wanted what I had; I wanted what you had. I slept with both of your husbands.

MARA

That's all right, I slept with all three of yours.

EVE

Yes, I know. I used to wonder about your taste in men. I did know about you and Luke, by the way.

MARA

How?

EVE

Oh, he told me. He seemed proud of it until I told it was a very common accomplishment.

MARA

Was that before or after you slept with him?

EVE

During. I thought I should even the score.

MARA

...Are you going to shoot me, Eve?

Enter Todd from kitchen, stealthily. He has the cleaver. Eve has her back to him. He waits for his moment

EVE

(of gun)

Oh, you mean this? No. We've been friends too long. I have something else in mind for you...I'm going to shoot my husband instead. That's why I sent him the message on your cellphone instead of mine, so he'd come in his little disguise.

MARA

You're going to kill your husband?

EVE
It's much easier to replace a
husband than a friend.

Hearing this, Todd steps up behind Eve, raises the cleaver to strike.

Suddenly WE HEAR Luke's Cellphone Ring.

TODD
What the hell!

Eve turns and sees Todd, cleaver arrested in mid-air by the startling cellphone ring. She points the gun at him and he freezes completely.

EVE
Ah, Todd.

TODD
(of cleaver)
I found it.

EVE
We have to talk.

Eve SHOOTS TODD. Todd falls to the floor, dead. (Luke's cellphone STOPS RINGING but we may not notice in the tumult.)

MARA
Oh, my god! You really shot him.

Eve pokes the corpse with a toe.

EVE
(surprised)
I'm as good a shot as you are.

MARA
How could you do that?

EVE
I did it for you. Now you won't
have to worry about the
threatening messages any more.

MARA
What do you mean?

EVE
This one was sending them.

MARA
But what about...

Mara indicates Luke.

EVE

Just another fan. Then he became
Todd's little helper...Now we have
one corpse apiece.

MARA

You're out of your mind.

EVE

No, just slow to act. What woman
hasn't wanted to kill her husband,
at one time or another? I hope
you'll excuse me if I don't help
clean up, but I have to go now.

MARA

You're going to leave with your
husband lying there dead?

EVE

Oh, yes. That's the plan, after
all.

MARA

What's my part in your plan?

Eve Dials 911 on the house phone.

EVE

You're going to pay the price for
murdering two men, of course.

(into phone)

Help, he's got a gun! Help!

She hangs up.

EVE

(continuing)

Don't bother to call back and tell
them not to come. They'll come
anyway, that's their rule.

(indicates Todd)

He taught me that.

MARA

Are you going to turn yourself in?

EVE

I'm going to go home and take a
long soak with a glass of wine.

(more)

EVE (cont'd)

You can explain how you didn't shoot your lover despite all the evidence to the contrary.

MARA

You shot him.

EVE

Your fingerprints are on the gun, not mine. I'll just toss it in the trash on the way out, by the way. They'll find it, of course, but it will look bad for you. Also, they'll detect the traces of gunpowder on your hand, it doesn't come off that easily and you don't have much time to scrub. I read that in one of his little books, too. He made me read everything he wrote and tell him how good it was. Hypocrisy of a level only you could appreciate.

MARA

You shot the gun, you'll have it too.

Eve holds up the gloves that she is still wearing.

PHONE RINGS. Eve answers the phone.

EVE

(into phone)

Helllp!

(hangs up)

Look on the bright side. The police will be able to open your powder room door for you...Oops, what will they find? Or you could put Luke's fingerprints on the gun and say they shot each other, but, oops, you can't get to Luke, can you?...Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll leave before the police arrive.

MARA

You scheming bitch.

EVE

Oh, and don't worry about the theater.

(more)

EVE (cont'd)

I'm sure the new artistic director will give us what the audience wants. Mysteries, two character comedies, old musicals...

MARA

You monster! You Philistine!...Do you think you can get away with this?

EVE

Why not? You've been getting away with murder for years. All I have to do is walk out the door before the police come and let you try to explain the bodies.

MARA

I can stop you from leaving.

Eve holds up the gun.

EVE

Think so?

MARA

You can't really shoot me, though, can you? If you do you become the jealous wife and the prime suspect.

EVE

Well...

MARA

So why not stick around until the police come and we'll face them together?

EVE

Goodbye, Mara. And good luck.

Eve starts towards the door.

MARA

Grahhhh!

With a scream of rage, Mara leaps on Eve, they wrestle for control of the gun and have a knock-down, drag-out fight, cursing each other the while. The struggle takes them close to the safe room door. They fall to the floor, and continue to wrestle on the floor. The gun falls free and is just out of the reach of both them. They claw for it.

WE HEAR POLICE SIREN.

Eve finally manages to hit Mara on the head with her shoe, stunning her.

EVE
Nice try, Mara but I'll still be
out of here before the police come.

AN ARM REACHES OUT OF THE SAFE ROOM AND GRABS EVE BY THE ANKLE.

EVE
(screams)
Arrgh!

Luke drags Eve towards the safe room.

EVE
(continuing; to Mara)
The gun! Give me the gun!

Siren gets very close.

Mara gets to her feet and eases the gun away from Eve's reach with her foot.

MARA
What will you give me for it?

Eve is pulled closer to safe room. The process continues as if she's being slowly swallowed. We see only Luke's arm.

EVE
Mara, please!

Mara continues to inch the gun tantalizingly out of Eve's reach.

MARA
What's it worth to you?

POUNING ON DOOR.

POLICE (OFF)
Police! Open up!

EVE
(to Luke)
I'll give you anything you want!

MARA
(to Luke)
How would you like to play Hamlet?

POUNING ON DOOR.

CURTAIN

THE END